

# Ghanaian arrested in UK on wedding day for immigration offence

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Ghanaian bride Cecilia Siaw was arrested at her wedding ceremony and made to take mug shots by the UK authorities.

A 45-year-old Ghanaian resident in the United Kingdom, Cecilia Siaw was getting married to her German fiancé on June 22 at the Portsmouth registers office when police from the UK Home Office stormed in and arrested her for immigration-related offences.

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Court proceedings reveal that Siaw, a trained teacher, had immigrated to the UK in 2009 with proper legal documentation.

However, in 2013 the British Home Office declined her application for an extension of her “leave to remain.” Siaw then procured illegitimate identity documents in a desperate bid to extend her stay.

The UK Home Office says it discovered the irregularities in Siaw’s documentation when she tendered the fake papers at her place of work.

Siaw confessed to paying the sum of £5,000, or about \$6,500, to a man who claimed that he worked in the Home Office and could process a “leave to remain” document for her. The man, whom she first met on a train ride, sold her identity documents registered to an Indian man.

Prosecutors maintained that Siaw could not have been oblivious of her actions:

“At interview she claimed she bought the document from a man on a train in circumstances which must have alerted her to the document being either false or improperly obtained. I say that because the man from whom she bought the document, she says, claimed to work for the Home Office and the defendant said she paid £5,000 for a leave to remain document.”

Prosecutor James Kellam said.

Cecilia Siaw had admitted one count of possession of an identity document with improper intention and one count of knowingly remaining in the UK beyond the time limited by leave to remain. Judge Roger Hetherington of the Portsmouth Crown Court sentenced Siaw to six months in jail, saying, “I have no alternative but to impose an immediate prison sentence.”

Oscar Vincent, counsel to Cecilia Siaw, had defended his client saying: “At the time of her arrest Mrs Siaw and her husband were at Portsmouth Register Office for a ceremony to register their marriage in the UK. She was arrested in her wedding dress immediately before the ceremony.” Siaw was made to take mug shots while still fully dressed in her bridal outfit.

“This is a lady who on completion of her studies in 2011 genuinely has made a contribution to the UK,” he further pleaded.

Cecilia Siaw worked in the UK as a healthcare provider looking after vulnerable people.

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